EST Literacy (Writing) • Punctuation Guide

American Diploma — Egyptian Scholastic Test Preparation

Standard English Conventions | SAT / ACT Aligned | Essential Rules & Traps

1. Connecting Independent Clauses (Sentence Boundaries)

An **Independent Clause (IC)** is a complete thought containing both a subject and a verb. Joining two independent clauses requires specific, grammatical punctuation marks.

METHOD	PATTERN / FORMULA	EXAMPLE
Period	`IC . IC`	The exam was challenging. Most students performed well.
Semicolon	`IC ; IC`	The exam was challenging; most students performed well.
Comma + FANBOYS	`IC , [FANBOYS] IC`	The exam was challenging, but most students performed well.
Semicolon + Transition	`IC ; [Transition] , IC`	The exam was challenging; however, most students performed well.

💡 **The Golden Rule of EST Semicolons**

On the EST, a **period** and a **semicolon** are functionally identical. If two answer choices are completely identical except one uses a period and the other a semicolon, **eliminate both immediately**.

⚠️ **Common Errors Tested on EST**

- **Comma Splice:** Joining two independent clauses with only a comma (`IC , IC`).
  ~~The test was hard, students studied all night.~~
- **Run-on Sentence:** Joining two independent clauses with no punctuation (`IC IC`).
  ~~The test was hard students studied all night.~~

2. Comma Rules (,)

A. Non-Essential Clauses & Appositives

Use commas to set off descriptive information that can be removed without altering the sentence's core grammatical structure.

- **Dr. Ahmed, who lives in Cairo, published the paper.**
- **Rule of Symmetry:** Parenthetical elements must match punctuation on both sides (Comma...Comma, Dash...Dash, or Parenthesis...Parenthesis). Never mix types!

B. Introductory Clauses & Phrases

Place a comma after a dependent clause or prepositional phrase that opens the sentence.

- **Although the test was difficult, she scored a high mark.**

C. Separating Items in a List

Use commas to separate three or more items in a list. The EST enforces the Oxford Comma (before "and"/"or").

- **The student brought a pencil, an eraser, and a calculator.**

D. Where NOT to Use Commas

- **Subject & Verb:** NEVER place a single comma between a subject and its verb.
  ~~The students in the classroom, were listening carefully.~~
- **Prepositions:** NEVER place a comma before a preposition unless completing a non-essential phrase.
  ~~He went, to the library after school.~~
- **Compound Subject/Object:** NEVER use a comma between two subjects or verbs joined by "and".
  ~~Omar studied hard, and passed the test.~~ (No comma needed when the second part lacks a subject).

3. Colons (:) and Single Dashes (—)

Colons

Colons introduce an explanation, a detailed list, or a summary.

- **Mandatory Requirement:** The clause *before* a colon MUST be a complete independent clause. What comes after can be a clause, phrase, or single word.
- **Correct: She had only one goal: to pass the EST exam.**
- ~~Incorrect: Her main goals are: studying, passing, and graduating.~~ (Incomplete clause before colon).

Single Dashes

A single dash functions almost identically to a colon—creating emphasis or introducing an explanation at the end of a complete sentence.

- **There was only one candidate qualified for the job—Sarah.**

4. Apostrophes (') — Possession & Contractions

Apostrophes indicate possession or contractions. They are frequently tested with pronouns.

NOUN / PRONOUN TYPE	APOSTROPHE RULE	EXAMPLE
Singular Noun	Add **'s**	The **student's** desk (1 student)
Plural Noun (ends in -s)	Add **'** after the *s*	The **students'** desks (multiple students)
Irregular Plural Noun	Add **'s**	The **children's** toys / **women's** rights

Possessive Pronouns vs. Contractions

📌 **Essential Pronoun Distinctions**

Key Rule: Possessive pronouns NEVER use apostrophes on the EST!

POSSESSIVE (NO APOSTROPHE)	CONTRACTION (WITH APOSTROPHE)
Its = belonging to it	**It's** = It is / It has
Their = belonging to them	**They're** = They are
Whose = belonging to who	**Who's** = Who is
Your = belonging to you	**You're** = You are

5. Quick EST Test Strategy Checklist

✔ **Quick Test Day Checklist**

1. **Check clause completeness:** Always label the clause before and after the punctuation mark as Dependent (DC) or Independent (IC).
2. **Period = Semicolon = Comma + FANBOYS:** They all perform the same job. Use process of elimination.
3. **Colon rule check:** Ensure the sentence before a colon can stand completely alone as a sentence.
4. **Match pairs:** If a non-essential phrase opens with a comma, it must close with a comma.
5. **Pronoun test:** Replace *it's / command contraction* with the full words (e.g., "it is") to see if the sentence makes sense.

دليل علامات الترقيم للدبلومة الأمريكية (EST)

Punctuation Rules for American Diploma - Egyptian Scholastic Test (Literacy 1)

اختبار **Egyptian Scholastic Test (EST I - Literacy 1)** يختبر علامات الترقيم بناءً على قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية الأمريكية القياسية (Standard American English). هذه القواعد ثابتة ومحددة ويمكن التنبؤ بها بسهولة.

1. الربط بين الجمل المستقلة (Sentence Boundaries)

الجملة المستقلة (**Independent Clause - IC**) تحتوي على فاعل وفعل وتعبر عن معنى تام يمكن أن يقف بمفرده كجملة كاملة.

القاعدة (أ): الفواصل القياسية

للربط بين جملتين مستقلتين، يجب استخدام إحدى الطرق التالية فقط:

- **النقطة (`.`):** `IC. IC.`
- **الفاصلة المنقوطة (`;`):** `IC; IC.` (تعمل تماماً مثل النقطة في امتحان EST)
- **الفاصلة + حروف العطف FANBOYS (`, + for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so`):** `IC, FANBOYS IC.`

❌ **Incorrect (Comma Splice - خطأ فاصلة زائدة):**

```
The research team analyzed the sample, they published their findings immediately.
```

❌ **Incorrect (Fused Sentence - خطأ دمج بدون ترقيم):**

```
The research team analyzed the sample they published their findings immediately.
```

✅ **Correct (استخدام نقطة):**

```
The research team analyzed the sample. They published their findings immediately.
```

✅ **Correct (استخدام فاصلة منقوطة):**

```
The research team analyzed the sample; they published their findings immediately.
```

✅ **Correct (استخدام فاصلة وحرف عطف):**

```
The research team analyzed the sample, and they published their findings immediately.
```

القاعدة (ب): الظروف الانتقالية (Transitional Adverbs)

الكلمات الانتقالية مثل (*however, therefore, moreover, furthermore, nevertheless*) **ليست** من حروف العطف (FANBOYS). ربط جملتين كاملتين باستخدام فاصلة فقط مع هذه الكلمات يعتبر خطأً شائداً (Comma Splice).

❌ **Incorrect:**

```
The study was well funded, however, the results were inconclusive.
```

✅ **Correct:**

```
The study was well funded; however, the results were inconclusive.
```

2. النقطتان الرأسيتان (:) والشرطة المفردة (–)

تُستخدم النقطتان الرأسيتان أو الشرطة المفردة لتقديم شرح، مثال، توضيح، أو قائمة.

شرط أساسي: النص الذي يسبق النقطتين أو الشرطة المفردة **يجب أن يكون جملة مستقلة كاملة والمعنى تام**. أما ما بعدهما فيمكن أن يكون جملة كاملة أو شبه جملة/قائمة.

❌ **Incorrect:**

`Ingredients for the reaction include: zinc, copper, and sulfuric acid.`

(غير صحيح لأن ما قبل النقطتين "Ingredients for the reaction include" ليس جملة مكتملة المعنى)

✅ **Correct:**

`The experiment requires three main ingredients: zinc, copper, and sulfuric acid.`

❌ **Incorrect:**

`The lead engineer had only one goal which was—to reduce fuel consumption.`

✅ **Correct:**

`The lead engineer had only one goal—to reduce fuel consumption.`

3. العناصر غير الأساسية (Non-Essential Elements)

تكون العبارة **غير أساسية** إذا كان حذفها من الجملة لا يخل بالمعنى العام أو القواعد النحوية والجملة تظل مفهومة.

قاعدة التماثل (Symmetric Punctuation)

يجب إحاطة المعلومات غير الأساسية بعلامات ترقيم متطابقة من الطرفين:

- فاصلتان (`, ... ,`)
- شرطتان (`– ... –`)
- قوسان (`( ... )`)

❌ **Incorrect (خلط علامات الترقيم):**

`Dr. Vance—a leading expert in genetics, spoke at the symposium.`

✅ **Correct (استخدام فاصلتين):**

`Dr. Vance, a leading expert in genetics, spoke at the symposium.`

✅ **Correct (استخدام شرطتين):**

`Dr. Vance—a leading expert in genetics—spoke at the symposium.`

الفرق بين Which و That

- **Which:** تُستخدم للمعلومات غير الأساسية (إضافية) ← **تتطلب فواصل**.
- **That:** تُستخدم للمعلومات الأساسية التي تحدد اسماً معيناً ← **بدون فواصل**.

❌ **Incorrect:**

```
The cars, that were manufactured in 2020, were recalled.
```

✅ **Correct (تحديد سيارات معينة):**

The cars **that were manufactured in 2020** were recalled.

✅ **Correct (معلومات إضافية):**

The company's primary electric vehicle, **which was released in 2020,** won several safety awards.

4. فاصلة الملكية (Apostrophes)

تختبر أسئلة الفاصلة العليا في EST ما إذا كان الاسم مفرداً، جمعاً، أو مضافاً إليه.

نوع الاسم	القاعدة	مثال
مفرد ممتلك (Singular Possessive)	إضافة `'s`	The **scientist's** discovery *(عالم واحد)*
جمع ممتلك ينتهي بـ s	إضافة `'` بعد الـ s	The **scientists'** discovery *(مجموعة علماء)*
جمع شاذ (Irregular Plural)	إضافة `'s`	The **children's** books
جمع فقط (بدون ملكية)	بدون فاصلة عليا	Three **scientists** published the report.

استثناء الضمائر (Possessive Pronouns)

ضمائر الملكية **لا تأخذ أبداً** فاصلة عليا (Apostrophe):

- **It's:** اختصار لـ (It is / It has).
- **Its:** ضمير ملكية لغير العاقل (بدون apostrophe).
- **They're:** اختصار لـ (They are).
- **Their:** ضمير ملكية للجمع.
- **Their's / Its':** أشكال خاطئة تماماً ونحوياً غير موجودة في امتحان EST.

❌ **Incorrect:**

The tree dropped **it's** leaves during winter.

✅ **Correct:**

The tree dropped **its** leaves during winter.

5. أخطاء وفخاخ شائعة في امتحان EST

الفخ الأول: الفصل بين الفاعل والفعل (Separating Subject from Verb)

لا تضع فاصلة مفردة إطلاقاً بين الفاعل وفعله إلا إذا كانت الفاصلة لإغلاق جملة فرعية غير أساسية.

❌ **Incorrect:**

```
The architect who designed the glass tower in downtown Cairo, renovated the museum.
```

✅ **Correct:**

```
The architect who designed the glass tower in downtown Cairo renovated the museum.
```

الفخ الثاني: وضع فاصلة قبل حرف الجر

تجنب وضع فاصلة قبل حرف الجر (مثل *of, in, with, to*) أو قبل *because* عندما تأتي بعد الجملة الرئيسية.

❌ **Incorrect:**

```
The study yielded impressive results, in a short period of time.
```

✅ **Correct:**

```
The study yielded impressive results in a short period of time.
```

6. نماذج أسئلة وتدريبات بطريقة EST

السؤال الأول (Practice Question 1):

Although solar energy is becoming more affordable, storing excess electricity remains a major challenge [1] **however, new battery** technology could soon solve this issue.

A) NO CHANGE
B) challenge; however, new battery
C) challenge, however new battery
D) challenge new battery

الإجابة الصحيحة: B

الشرح: العبارتان *"storing excess electricity remains a major challenge"* و *"new battery technology could soon solve this issue"* هما جملتان مستقلتان تماماً. الربط بينهما يتطلب فاصلة منقوطة (Semicolon) قبل الظرف الانتقالي *however* .

السؤال الثاني (Practice Question 2):

The research team collected samples from three different [2] **locations, the desert, the forest,** and the coastal wetland.

A) NO CHANGE
B) locations: the desert, the forest
C) locations; the desert, the forest
D) locations, being the desert, the forest

الإجابة الصحيحة: B

الشرح: الجملة الممتدة قبل نقطتي الترقيم تعبر عن معنى تام وجملة مستقلة مفيدة وتتضمن التمهيد لقائمة. لذلك، الخيار B بالنقطتين الرأسيتين هو الخيار الصحيح. الخيار C خاطئ لأن الفاصلة المنقوطة تتطلب جملة كاملة بعدها.

EST GRAMMAR MASTERY

Dependent & Independent Clauses

EST American Diploma — Writing and Language Section Study Guide

1. Fundamental Definitions

Clause structure is one of the most heavily tested topics on the EST Writing & Language section. Understanding how clauses interact prevents punctuation and run-on errors.

1. Independent Clause (Complete Sentence)

Contains a **Subject** + **Verb** and expresses a **complete thought**. It can stand alone as a standalone sentence.

> **Example:** *The student prepared thoroughly for the EST Writing exam.*

2. Dependent Clause (Incomplete Sentence / Fragment)

Contains a **Subject** + **Verb**, but starts with a **subordinating word** (conjunction or relative pronoun). It does *not* express a complete thought and cannot stand alone.

> **Example:** *Because the student prepared thoroughly for the EST Writing exam...*
> (This leaves the reader waiting for the main thought to complete).

2. Key Signal Words & Clause Markers

Spotting these markers immediately tells you whether a clause is independent or dependent:

Subordinating Conjunctions (Creates Dependent Clauses)	Relative Pronouns (Creates Dependent Clauses)	Conjunctive Adverbs (Stays Independent!)
because, although, even though, since, while, whereas, if, unless, until, after, before, provided that, as long as	who, whom, whose, which, that, where, when	however, therefore, moreover, nevertheless, consequently, furthermore, instead, besides

3. Mandatory EST Punctuation Rules

Rule A: Connecting Two Independent Clauses (I + I)

Joining two independent clauses with only a comma creates a **Comma Splice** (Grammar Error). You must use one of these 4 valid formats:

1. `[Independent] . [Independent]` — *The exam was rigorous. Many students excelled.*
2. `[Independent] ; [Independent]` — *The exam was rigorous; many students excelled.*

3. `[Independent] , [FANBOYS] [Independent]` — *The exam was rigorous, but many students excelled.*
   (FANBOYS = For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So)
4. `[Independent] ; [Conjunctive Adverb] , [Independent]` — *The exam was rigorous; however, many students excelled.*

Rule B: Connecting Dependent and Independent Clauses

- **Dependent Clause FIRST:** Requires a comma after the dependent clause.
  `[Dependent] , [Independent]` → *Although the test was challenging, Omar earned a top score.*
- **Independent Clause FIRST:** Usually requires **NO comma** before the subordinating conjunction.
  `[Independent] [Dependent]` → *Omar earned a top score although the test was challenging.*

Rule C: Essential vs. Non-Essential Relative Clauses

Type	Rule	Example
Non-Essential (Extra Info)	Use **commas** around it. Use *which* for objects, *who* for people.	*The EST exam, **which is taken in Egypt**, assesses core academic skills.*
Essential (Crucial Info)	**No commas**. Use *that* for objects, *who* for people.	*The score **that determines university placement** requires consistent practice.*

Classic EST Traps to Avoid!

Trap #1: The False Conjunction: Words like *however, therefore, moreover* are **NOT** subordinating conjunctions. You cannot connect two sentences with `, however,`. That is a comma splice!

Trap #2: Missing Main Verb: Words ending in *-ing* (participles) without an auxiliary verb (is, are, was) do NOT form independent clauses.
Wrong: The researcher conducting experiments all afternoon.
Right: The researcher conducted experiments all afternoon.

4. EST-Style Practice Questions

Question 1

Many students find the reading section challenging, <u>however, proper strategy</u> can significantly boost overall speed and accuracy.

A) NO CHANGE
B) however proper strategy
C) ; however, proper strategy
D) ; however proper strategy

Correct Answer: C
Explanation: Both sides are independent clauses. Connecting them with just a comma and "however" forms a comma splice. A semicolon before "however" and a comma after it is required.

Question 2

Although solar panels generate clean energy they remain expensive for rural communities without government subsidies.

A) NO CHANGE
B) Although solar panels generate clean energy,
C) Although, solar panels generate clean energy
D) Solar panels generate clean energy,

Correct Answer: B
Explanation: The sentence begins with a dependent clause ("Although solar panels..."). A comma is required after the dependent clause before joining the independent clause.